

IN THE CLAIMS:

The claims have been amended as follows:

1. (canceled)
2. (canceled)
3. (canceled)
4. (canceled)
5. (canceled)
6. (canceled)
7. (canceled)

8. (currently amended) A dental unit comprising:

a water line equipped with a plurality of conduits that supply fluids to handpieces and fluid consuming units that use fluid from a main supply or accessory fluids from corresponding independent lines; and

an apparatus for detecting biofilm in the water conduits, especially biofilm adhering to the inside surfaces of the conduits, the apparatus adapted to dispense a fluid reagent and comprising means for detecting a reaction between the biofilm and the fluid reagent, at least on the surfaces of a conduit portion of one of the conduits, wherein said conduit portion is transparent to allow a direct visual check, and wherein the detecting means, at least in the conduit portion, are of the direct detection type to detect an alteration in the biofilm caused by the fluid and comprise feed means for introducing the reagent or coloring fluid connected to, and acting on, said transparent conduit portion, wherein the feed means comprise a tank containing the reagent or coloring fluid and means for pumping the fluid into the conduit portion through a first connecting channel leading into a first end of the transparent conduit portion, and ~~The Unit according to claim 7,~~ wherein the other end of the conduit portion is connected to a second channel for draining out the mixture consisting of the reagent or coloring fluid and the fluid already present in the conduit portion.

9. (currently amended) A dental unit comprising:

a water line equipped with a plurality of conduits that supply fluids to handpieces and fluid consuming units that use fluid from a main supply or accessory fluids from corresponding independent lines; and

an apparatus for detecting biofilm in the water conduits, especially biofilm adhering to the inside surfaces of the conduits, the apparatus adapted to dispense a fluid reagent and comprising means for detecting a reaction between the biofilm and the fluid reagent, at least on the surfaces of a conduit portion of one of the conduits, wherein said conduit portion is transparent to allow a direct visual check, and wherein the detecting means, at least in the conduit portion, are of the direct detection type to detect an alteration in the biofilm caused by the fluid and comprise feed means for introducing the reagent or coloring fluid connected to, and acting on, said transparent conduit portion. ~~The Unit according to claim 6,~~ wherein the feed means comprise a tank containing the reagent or coloring fluid and means for pumping the fluid into the conduit portion through a first connecting channel leading into a first end of the transparent conduit portion; the other end of the conduit portion being connected to a second channel connected directly to the tank and used to recirculate the mixture consisting of the reagent or coloring fluid and the fluid present in the conduit portion.

- 10. (canceled)
- 11. (canceled)
- 12. (canceled)
- 13. (canceled)
- 14. (canceled)
- 15. (canceled)
- 16. (canceled)
- 17. (canceled)
- 18. (canceled)

19. (canceled)
20. (canceled)

21. (currently amended) A dental unit comprising:

a water line equipped with a plurality of conduits that supply fluids to handpieces and fluid consuming units that use fluid from a main supply or accessory fluids from corresponding independent lines; and

an apparatus for detecting biofilm in the water conduits, especially biofilm adhering to the inside surfaces of the conduits, the apparatus adapted to dispense a fluid reagent and comprising means for detecting a reaction between the biofilm and the fluid reagent, at least on the surfaces of a conduit portion of one of the conduits,

wherein said conduit portion is transparent to allow a direct visual check, and wherein the detecting means, at least in the conduit portion, are of the direct detection type to detect an alteration in the biofilm caused by the fluid and comprise feed means for introducing the reagent or coloring fluid connected to, and acting on, said transparent conduit portion, and

~~The Unit according to claim 6,~~ wherein the transparent conduit portion is equipped with shutoff valve means located at the ends of it, designed to isolate the portion from the rest of the water line before the reagent or coloring fluid is introduced.

[go to next page]

22. (currently amended) A dental unit comprising:

a water line equipped with a plurality of conduits that supply fluids to handpieces and fluid consuming units that use fluid from a main supply or accessory fluids from corresponding independent lines; and

an apparatus for detecting biofilm in the water conduits, especially biofilm adhering to the inside surfaces of the conduits, the apparatus adapted to dispense a fluid reagent and comprising means for detecting a reaction between the biofilm and the fluid reagent, at least on the surfaces of a conduit portion of one of the conduits ~~The Unit according to claim 42,~~ wherein the conduit portion forms an extension of one of the conduits that supply the handpieces and is equipped with an independent drain.

23. (canceled)

24. (currently amended) A dental unit comprising:

a water line equipped with a plurality of conduits that supply fluids to handpieces and fluid consuming units that use fluid from a main supply or accessory fluids from corresponding independent lines; and

an apparatus for detecting biofilm in the water conduits, especially biofilm adhering to the inside surfaces of the conduits, the apparatus adapted to dispense a fluid reagent and comprising means for detecting a reaction between the biofilm and the fluid reagent, at least on the surfaces of a conduit portion of one of the conduits, wherein the detecting means, at least in the conduit portion, are of the indirect detection type and comprise ~~The Unit according to claim 5, wherein the detecting means comprise a plurality of the~~ a plurality of sample elements consisting of ~~a plurality of balls~~ made of the same type of material as that of which the conduits of the water line are

made, positioned inside the conduit portion and removable from the conduit portion itself; said plurality of sample elements being contacted by the flow of fluid in the dental unit in such a way as to create the same operating conditions as those in the conduit portion, thus allowing the biofilm to adhere also to the plurality of sample elements.

- 25. (canceled)
- 26. (canceled)
- 27. (canceled)

28. (previously presented) The Unit according to claim 24, wherein the container has a sealed access zone allowing it to be detachably coupled to a sampling cell from which the balls can be taken out one at a time and which is filled with a biofilm reagent or coloring fluid that causes the surface of the ball to change color perceptibly.

29. (previously presented) The Unit according to claim 28, wherein the sampling cell is of the disposable type.

- 30. (canceled)
- 31. (canceled)
- 32. (canceled)
- 33. (canceled)
- 34. (canceled)
- 35. (canceled)
- 36. (canceled)
- 37. (canceled)
- 38. (canceled)
- 39. (canceled)
- 40. (canceled)
- 41. (canceled)
- 42. (canceled)
- 43. (canceled)